

Virginia Comprehensive Assistance Network [VA CAN] Meeting
June 20, 2006
Meeting Notes

Attendance:

Stu Neal—Community College Workforce Alliance (CCWA)
Linda Hawkins and Barbara Lindahl—Internal Revenue Service (IRS)
Jim McKean—Department of Business Assistance (DBA)
Kathy Wiberly—Department of Health (VDH)
Jennifer Wester—Department of Labor and Industry (DoLI)
Eric Olson—Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation (DPOR)
My Lan Tran—Office of Minority Business Development, City of Richmond
Richard Rasmussen and Rodney Sobin—Small Business Assistance Program (SBAP), Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)

Roundtable

Richard Rasmussen noted that EPA is developing air toxics rules that will cover 50 business categories. These rules will likely have significant impact on small businesses. On request he will provide additional information. DEQ continues to proceed with the Northern Virginia auto body/collision repair shop voluntary self-certification program. The SBAP is interested in reaching out to provide services, such as promoting tune-ups, for small boilers. It was noted that many small businesses are not members of industry associations, so such associations may be insufficient means to inform small businesses of their requirements.

My Lan Tran discussed a variety of events that the Office of Minority Business Development (formerly Office of Minority Business Enterprise) is sponsoring or organizing, including an event planned for June 29 at St. Augustine Church in Richmond to be offered in Spanish in collaboration with the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. The Office and City are working to provide more outreach in a multicultural and multilingual manner. The City is reforming its procurement system as part of a broader reform of city government. Her office is now within the Office of the Mayor. Procurement preferences will go beyond minority businesses to encompass small businesses located in five Richmond Enterprise Zones.

Stu Neal reported on the Central Virginia Small Business Resource Day event that took place on May 19, 2006. The event drew over 970 attendees. Thirty-six seminars attracted over 370 participants. He noted that many participants learned of the event through e-mail and other contacts via VaCAN-participating organizations. The 2007 event is already being planned to be a 3-day event with a focus on international trade. With SBA and U.S. Department of Commerce collaboration, it will target participation from across the East Coast. In a different thrust, he discussed "Operation No Return" as an initiative to reduce recidivism among convicts by increasing interest in business. The initiative will include seminars in penal institutions.

Jennifer Wester reported on DoLI's recently completed annual conference, which included 360 attendees and 43 vendors, including federal and out-of-state participants. The Safety and Health Codes Board recently promulgated rules requiring certain levels of insurance coverage for boiler inspectors. DoLI's regional director for Richmond will participate in the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce June 29 event previously cited.

Jim McKean noted over 70 events associated with that Business Appreciation Week in May. The Department's Workforce Services Group can provide counseling and other incentives for small (under 250 employees) non-retail businesses seeking to grow employment (net of at least five new jobs, at least \$100,000 investment, jobs earning at least \$8 per hour). Attraction of two candidate software companies to southwest Virginia is a high priority effort at DBA. The 800-number DBA hotline is busy with many queries on starting a business. Some queries are about professional licensing issues under DPOR jurisdiction and on state procurement. While state procurement is primarily the responsibility of the Department of General Services and the Department of Minority Business Enterprise, DBA assists in this

area. DBA is also looking to see if there will be opportunities to better work with and assist business incubators.

Eric Olson provided a short update on DPOR activities, including progress in regulations pertinent to tattooing and body piercing; the possibility of rules regarding photogrammetry professionals; and a growing issue regarding alternatives to conventional septic systems (a Health Department regulatory concern). Stu Neal noted increased community college offerings of DPOR training.

Kathy Wibberly noted the defunding of the State Planning Grant. As a result, VDH has had to compress and reduce scope of pertinent activities. Currently insuremorevirginians.com offers some information on health coverage options. The Department hopes to develop a more interactive web site in which companies could enter information on number of employees, wages, and other parameters to help businesses identify health insurance options. VDH also hopes to establish a foundation or center for health coverage education. Kathy also noted a VDH site at <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/ohpp/clasact.asp>, the Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Health Care Services for Virginian Resource Guide.

Our main speaker, Linda Hawkins, IRS Senior Tax Specialist, SBSE Taxpayer Education & Communication discussed IRS outreach to small business, with a focus on the resources and services available through the IRS website. The site provides ready access to forms and publications and to business resource pages that help people to understand business startup and other business topics. Online users can immediately apply for and receive an employer identification number (EIN), in contrast to the previous hardcopy application procedure that took time.

Next Meeting

Tentative August 22nd, 10:00 AM DEQ Piedmont Regional Office.